

TWO
DISCOURSES:

THE FIRST,
An APPEAL to the MIRACLES of
J E S U S
As PROOFS of His *MESSIASHIP*.

THE SECOND,
A DEMONSTRATION of the
TRUTH and CERTAINTY
OF HIS
Resurrection from the DEAD.

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TWO

DISCOURSES

THE FIRST

AS APPEARING IN THE MIRACLES OF

THE FIRST

ALPHONSO DE MENDOSA

THE SECOND



A DEMONSTRATION OF

THE TRUTHS OF

OF HIS

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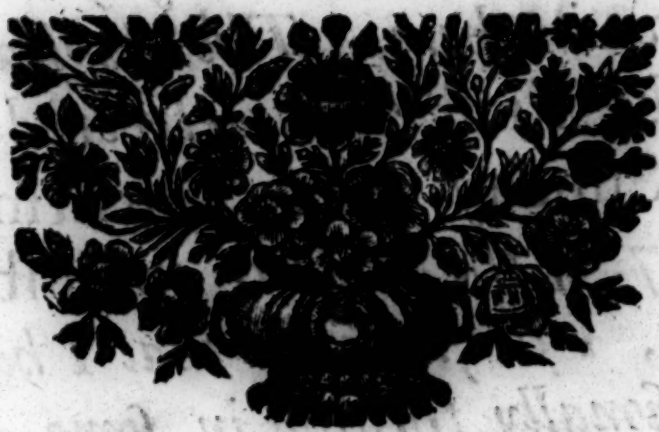
THE

T H E

P R E F A C E.

TH E two following Discourses were originally composed for the Benefit and Instruction of my own Parishioners, without any farther View in them. The Substance of the First was delivered on the Sunday before Christmas, 1727. of the Second, on Easter-Day, 1725. Since that I have occasionally thrown in some Additions to both, and endeavoured to make them fit for Publick Use.

*Use. Whether or no they are
so, I must leave to the Judgment
of the Reader. If there is any
thing in them, that in these
dangerous Times may serve to
strengthen and confirm the Faith
of a Christian, I have my End.*



A N
A P P E A L
T O T H E
Miracles of J E S U S,
A S P R O O F S o f h i s
M E S S I A H - S H I P.

APPEAL

TO THE

Miracles of Jesus

As PROOFS of his

MESSIAHSHIP.



MATTH. xi. 2, 3, 4, 5.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,

And said unto him, art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Jesus answer'd and said unto them, go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:

The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up.



N. this short History we have an Account given us of a most important Embassy from one *more than a Prophet* (a) to a Person of the most transcendant Dignity and Majesty, one no less than the *heir of all things, the brightness of God's glory, and the expresse image of his being* (b). The

(a) Mat. xi. 9.

(b) Heb. i. 2, 3.

subject of it is, a *Question* proposed on one side, and an *Answer* return'd to it on the other; both which I design to consider in my present Discourse.

In the *Question* two things are *implied*, and one *express'd*.

The first thing *implied* in it, is some *Prediction* or other, one or more, of a great and wonderful and extraordinary Person, whom the *Jews*, from their *Scriptures*, stiled the *Messiah*, that should come into the World. Such a *Prediction* we meet with in the *Old Testament*, where God promises the *Jews* to raise up to them a Prophet from among their brethren like unto MOSES (c), that is, a Prophet, who, like him, should be a Redeemer, a Prince, a Law-giver, and a Worker of Miracles: characters distinguishing enough, and such as from Moses's time to this no one Prophet among the *Jews*, except the blessed *Jesus*, either did, or could, lay claim to.

The second thing *implied* in this *Question*, is an *Expectation* of this Prophet's coming into the World, at and about the Time of *Jesus's* Appearance upon Earth, and this too, grounded on some *prophetical* Declarations. Such, we may reasonably believe, is that of *Jacob's*: *The scepter shall not de-*

(c) Deut. xviii. 18.

part from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come (d). Such is that of *Daniel's (e)*, which exactly determines the Time of his Coming by a given Number of Years from a fix'd and certain Period.

These and other Prophecies made not only *John*, but the whole Nation of the *Jews* to lift up their heads, and begin to think with themselves that their Redemption now was drawing nigh (f). Nay not the *Jews* only, but the *Heathens* themselves (g), as their own Writers witness, had the like expectation about the same time. Whence they derived theirs, whether from oral Tradition, or written Prophecies of their own, or Converse with the *Jews*, who were dispers'd among them, is uncertain: But that they had it, is certain enough, and the very Reception of the Gospel of Christ among them is unaccountable without it.——But to leave these, and return to the *Baptist*:

One thing, I said, in his *Question* was express'd, and that is a *Desire* to know, Whether or no *Jesus* was *that Prophet*, who was promis'd to come; and this, I take

(d) Gen. xlix. 24.
John i. 19, 20, 21.

(e) Dan. ix. 24.

(f) See

Vespas. c. 4. Tacit. Hist. l. 5.

(g) *Virg. Eclog. 4. Sueton. in*

it, not so much for his *own* Satisfaction, as theirs whom he sent to ask the Question.

John himself knew from several circumstances, and particularly from what he himself was an *Eye-witness* (b) of in the river *Jordan*, that this was not only the *Time* for the *Messiah* to appear, but that he actually was come, and that *Jesus* alone was *He*. Hence we are told (i), that he bare record, saying, *I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a Dove, and it abode upon him: and I knew him not* certainly till that time to be the *Messiah*: but *He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he, which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is THE SON OF GOD.* Hence those testimonies of his (k), *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize You with the holy Ghost* (l).

The *Baptist* therefore could have no Doubt of this matter. And from hence

(b) Mat. iii. 16, 17.

(k) John. i. 29.

(i) John i. 32, 33, 34

(l) Luke iii. 16.

we must conclude, that his *Question* concerning *Jesus's Messiah-ship* did not arise from any *Uncertainty* in *himself* about it, but was owing to the *Diffidence* of his two *Disciples*, whom he sent with it. They, it seems, notwithstanding the force and evidence of their Master's Attestation, might not yet fully be convinced, that *Jesus* was the *Christ*: and this probably was the cause of their being sent upon this Errand, that by this means they might have an opportunity of seeing farther and clearer Demonstrations of this great Truth from our Saviour himself: This is easy and natural enough, and on that account highly credible: but that the *Baptist* himself wanted still more Proof than already had been given him of our Lord's *Messiah-ship*, is a Thought that nothing but Jealousy itself can possibly suggest, and has no ground, that I can see, or reason to support it.

Nay supposing, that *John* really sent to ask this *Question* on his *own* account: yet this surely could not be out of any *Doubt*, whether *Jesus* was the *Messiah*, but mere *Impatience* to have him exert himself as *such*, and to display that Power and Splendour, which became, he thought, so great and glorious a Personage. *Art thou He, who was to come? Art thou the Christ, the son of God?* Then no longer conceal thyself under this Cloud of Poverty and Obscurity;

scurity; but shine out at once, like the Sun, in thy full and proper Lustre, and be a glorious Saviour and Redeemer of thy People *Israel*. So *Jezabel* to *Ahab* (m); *Dost thou now govern the Kingdom of Israel?* not calling the thing in question, but inciting him to give an instance of it, and shew himself a King. This our Saviour himself seems to take for the *Baptist's* meaning, when he says (n), *And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. In me?* that is, at the low and mean and sordid Condition, which I appear in.

Thus much for the *Question*. Let us now see the *Answer* to it. Go, says Jesus, and shew John again those things which ye hear and see: *The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised-up.*

His Reply, we see, is an *Appeal* to his *Miracles*, as well those, which he had formerly done, here recounted to *John's* Disciples, as those, which in that same Hour (o) he perform'd before their Eyes. And go, says he, return to your Master with an account of my *Credentials*: *Works* are my *Witnesses*; and therefore only tell him *what things you have heard and seen*, and from those *Evidences* let him judge,

(m) 1 Kings xxi. 7. (n) Mat. xi. 6. (o) Luke vii. 21.

whether I am *He, who was to come, or another* is still to be *look'd for*.

Such is *Jesus's* Answer, and a very full and sufficient one it is. He not only tacitly owns himself to be the *Messiah*, but supports his Right and Title to that Character by the clearest and strongest Evidence, that God himself can give, or Man require; I mean his doing such *Miracles*, as *no man could do, except God was with him* (p).

Miracles are to a Person, who pretends, as *Jesus* did, to come from Heaven, and to be God's *Messenger* to Man, what the King's *Letters of Credence* are to an *Ambassadour* sent to a foreign State. The former are no less *Proofs* not only of the *general Mission*, but *special Character*, which he assumes, who *Does* them, than the latter are of his, who *Bears* them. And though 'tis possible for the *Testimonials* of both to be *forg'd* and *counterfeited*; yet 'tis absolutely impossible in either case but that the *Fraud* soon must be discover'd, and laid open to the World. Either there will be found some *apparent Flaw* in the *Things* themselves, which are *appeal'd to*; or if there is not, the *Imposture* must presently be *known* to their *pretended Masters*, who in *justice* to *themselves*, as well as to o-

(p) John iii. 2.

thers concern'd, will be oblig'd to detect and expose the *Villainy*.

In the case of *Miracles* indeed, God may suffer *evil Men*, assisted by *evil Spirits*, to shew surprizing Prodigies, and do *Signs and lying Wonders*, which from the known Laws of Nature we cannot account for : But still this we may depend upon, that his Wisdom and his Goodness will never suffer any *Power* so far to imitate his *own*, that Truth and Falshood, the Creator and the Creature, the Works of God and the Devil, cannot some way or other be readily distinguished. The *Egyptian* Magicians, by their Sorceries and Inchantments (*q*), could turn their *Rods* into *Serpents* ; but at the same time could not preserve them from being swallow'd up by *Aaron's*. They could (*r*) change the *River* into *Blood*, and bring Frogs (*s*) upon the *Land* ; but could not stand before Moses (*t*) because of the *Boyl*, and were baffled, shamefully baffled, and exposed by the most base and contemptible *Insect* (*u*), which neither they with their *Art*, nor their Master, the Devil, with all his *Power* and *Subtilty*, was able to counterfeit. This, say they, (*x*) is the *Finger of GOD*.

(*q*) Exod. vii. 11, 12.

viii. 7. (*t*) Ibid. ix. 11.
ver. 19.

(*r*) Ibid. ver. 22.

(*u*) Ibid. viii. 18.

(*s*) Ibid.

(*x*) Ibid.

And

And if here they saw and confess'd God's *Finger*, then how may we discern his mighty *Hand*, and his out-stretched *Arm* in the *Wonders* and *Miracles* of *Jesus*! *Miracles*! which in the manner that they were done, by a *Touch*, or by a *Word*, were far above the reach of *Art*, and such as Devils themselves neither could, nor would perform. For could a DEVIL *, *open the Eyes of the Blind*? Or would *Satan* cast out *Satan*, and that to promote a *Doctrine* contrary to his own interest and inclination? No. That wicked Spirit has more stratagem than thus to weaken his own Dominion, and fight against himself. The blessed *Jesus* appeared on purpose in the flesh *to destroy the works of the Devil* (y). His *Laws* were all holy, and just, and good; all tending to the glory of God, and the happiness of Man; all levell'd against the Ruler of Darkness, and the Powers of his infernal Kingdom: and to suppose our Saviour in his *Miracles* to be assisted by *Him*, or *His*, is to suppose the greatest Absurdity.

Nor was *Jesus's Doctrine* only as good, as his *Miracles* in proof of his *Messiahship* were great; but his *Miracles* themselves, like the Works of the Creation,

* Joh. x. 21. Exod. iv. 11.

(y) 1 John iii. 8.

when God review'd them, were *good* too. The great Author of them employ'd not his Power in doing Mischief; but, as St. *Peter* expresses it (z), *went about doing Good*, making it every where his business to do so, and exerting his divine Virtue in the most wonderful Acts of Love, and Kindness, and Beneficence.

This Observation is so far acknowledged to be true, that among the numerous Miracles wrought by our Saviour, there are but three instances, which our Infidels pretend to bring as Exceptions to it; and with how much Reason we shall see immediately.

The first *Instance* they allege of this sort (a), is *Jesus's cursing the Fig-tree for having nothing but Leaves on it, at a Time when it was the Season of Figs*: I say, *when it was the Season of Figs*: For so it certainly was to that *Kind* (b) of *Fig-tree*, which had *Leaves* on it at *that time*; and the *Versions*, which say the contrary, do the greatest *Injury* both to the *Sense* of the *Evangelist*, and the *Conduct* of our *Saviour*. The Meaning plainly is, that when *Christ* came to the *Fig-tree*, *he found*

(z) Acts x. 38. (a) Mark xi. 13. (b) See Whitby on the place.

*nothing but Leaves, THOUGH * it was the time of Figs. And if so, where, I pray, was the Evil of pronouncing a Malediction on such a Tree, a fruitless, and therefore worthless Tree, which, as it grew on the † Highway, in all probability had no Owner; or, if it had one, was useless and unprofitable to him. There was certainly no Harm in this. And if there was not, the Miracle was really good. It not only prevented such a cheat and disappointment to others for the future, but illustrated the power of Jesus to his Disciples, and strengthen'd their Faith in him as the true Messiah.*

A second Instance (c) under this Head, is Jesus's Driving the Buyers and Sellers with their Wares and Merchandises out of the Temple, where it was not lawful for them to be: a Fact, say they, wonderful, but passionate and injurious.

* That this is the Meaning of *ὃ δὲ ἦν καιρὸς σὺκων*, I appeal to a Passage exactly parallel to this in *Ælian's Var. Hist.* l. viii. c. 12. *Παράδοξόν γε, ὃ δὲ ἀληθές, κ. τ. λ.* where translate, *ὃ γὰρ ἀληθές*, For it is not true, and it makes perfect Nonsense. For *Ælian* supposes the thing true, and goes on to account for it. The Grammatical Translation should be, Is it not true? asserting it to be so. But to an English ear I should much rather say, The thing is strange, THO' true.

† ἐπὶ τῆς ὁδῆς. *Matth.* xxi. 19. See *Mark* xi. 20.

(c) *John.* ii. 14, 15. *Mat.* xxi. 12.

Sadly injurious indeed! *Christ* shews those impious *Traders* their *Profanation* of that *Holy Place*. He tells them, that *God's House* was not to be *us'd* as a *common Market*, but a *House of Prayer to all Nations*. He commands them, for this Reason, to remove their *Wares* from thence; and on their refusing to do so, he makes a *Whip of Cords*, or perhaps but of *Bull-rushes*, and with no other *Weapon* forces them to *flie*. He who, consider'd only as a *private Man*, had, by the *allow'd Custom of his Nation (d)*, a *legal Right* to have *punish'd* them with *Death* for their *Abuse of God's Temple*, does no more than with a just and innocent *Indignation*, drive them out of it, not *hurting* their *Persons*, but *overturning* their *Seats* and *Tables* which *unlawfully* stood there. A most sad injury indeed, to make them suffer nothing, when they highly deserv'd Punishment! How unlike a *Saviour*, to shew *Mercy* instead of *Vengeance*!

The third and last *Instance* objected to us of this sort, (e) is *Jesus's permitting the Devils he cast out of a Man to enter into an Herd of Swine*; which *Permission* pro-

(d) See Selden de Jurē Naturae & Gentium juxta Discipl. Ebraeor. l. 4. c. 4, 5.

(e) Mat. viii. Mark v. Luke viii.

ved the *Cause* of the *Swines Destruction*,
and their *Owners Loss and Damage*.

Now the *Miracle* itself, of *dispossessing* the *Devils*, and *curing* the poor *Demoniac* is acknowledged to be good: and if the bare *Permission* of *Evil* be *bad*; what then can be said for the *Goodness* of *God himself*, who every Day *suffers* many Evils to be done? I may add, that the *Greatness* and *Reality* of this *Miracle* could not so well have been demonstrated without this *Permission*, which some are pleas'd so much to quarrel with. Had *Jesus* only ejected the *Devils*, and restored the Man to himself without any thing more: then what *Interpretation* might and would have been put upon this? What, but that the *Miracle* was no *Miracle* at all? that the only *Devils*, which the Man imagin'd himself possess'd with, were the *Vapours*? and that the *Distemper* was cur'd by nothing more than a few *comfortable Words*? This *Infidelity* would have said, and this our Saviour foresaw, and *prevented* by giving the *Devils* leave to pass into *other Animals*, and those too the *basest* and *foulest* upon Earth, and *such* as probably ought not to have been kept in *that Country*, or by those *Persons* they belong'd to. For the *Mischief* that follow'd, the *Devils* only were accountable: they had a Permission to enter into the
Swine,

Swine, but none at all to hurt or destroy them. The *Evil* therefore was all *theirs*: the *Good* only was our *Saviour's*.

These *Instances* then are no just *Exceptions* to the *Observation* I've laid down, but rather *Proofs* and *Confirmations* of it. And for all the rest of CHRIST's Miracles, may we not join, will not Infidels join with us, in that Acclamation of old, (f) *He hath done all things WELL*, wonderfully well, as well as when he made *both the Deaf to hear, and the Dumb to speak?*

The *Miracles* therefore which JESUS did in *Proof* of his *Messiah-ship*, are all of them *good* as well as *great*: and not only so, but, what makes them still stronger *Evidences* of what they were to *witness*, they are the very *same Miracles*, which God *foretold* that the *Messiah* should *perform*. *Strengthen ye*, says the Prophet, (g) *the weak hands, and the feeble knees. Your God — will come and save you. Then the Eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame Man leap as an hart, and the Tongue of the dumb shall sing.* These were the *wonderful things* to be effected by *him that should come*: these *very things* JESUS did in the Sight of *John's Disciples*; and by *these* plainly prov'd him-

(f) Mark vii. 37.

(g) Isa. xxxv. 3, 4, 5, 6.

self to be the *Messiah*, the *God*, the *Saviour*, whom the *Prophet* had foretold.

This *Argument* from *Miracles* in defence of *JESUS's Messiah-ship*, is in every Branch of it so clear, and so demonstrative, that the *modern Enemies* of *Christianity* are reduced to the strangest Shifts imaginable to evade the Force of it. These Men (such is their Modesty, as well a Love to Truth!) would persuade us to believe, in spite of common Sense, that the *Miracles* of *Jesus* were not *real*, but *mystical*, *spiritual*, *allegorical*, that is, in Truth, *no Miracles* at all. To which end they most grossly and impudently *abuse* the *Writings* of the antient *Fathers* of the *Church*, who, tho' they frequently loved to *accommodate*, nay to *force* the *Histories* of our Saviour's *Miracles* to *spiritual senses*; yet all of them *supposed* and *believed* them, when they did so, to be true and faithful *Narratives* of things *literally* to be understood as *matters of fact*.

This has been sufficiently (not to say superfluously) proved by Others. And had any of the *Fathers* done otherwise, I think no Man in his Wits would have any more regard to their Authority, than if they had written, as the *Papists* would persuade us, in behalf of *Transubstantiation*, or the *Pope's* universal *Sovereignty* over *Christian Kings* and *Princes*.

No man living bears a greater reverence to the *Fathers* than myself. But supposing *all of them*, from the *Apostolic Age* to this, unanimously to have asserted, (as 'tis certain they have not) that when our *Saviour* in my *Text* appealed to *Miracles* done by him as *Proofs* of his *Messiah-ship*, he referr'd not to those he then wrought in the *Flesh*, but to those *mystical ones*, which he would do in the *Spirit*: an assertion so monstrously irrational as this could never have any farther influence upon me, than to make me laugh at such nonsense, or pity and commiserate so wretched a Delusion. What a noble and consistent *Commentary*, on such *supposed Authorities* of the *Fathers*, must we put upon our *Saviour's Answer*? Go, and shew *John* again those things, those *SPIRITUAL Miracles*, which ye have heard and seen: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up. Such wonderful and supernatural Works I have DONE, and many such you have SEEN me now DO before your Eyes: And yet tho' you have have SEEN them, not one of them *has* been DONE, nor do I appeal to them as DONE, but only to such as shall be DONE in a *mystical and spiritual manner*. But notwithstanding this, go, and tell your Master *what things ye have heard and seen*, and from those *undone Facts*

Facts he will certainly know that I am *He, who was to come.*

Whether this, according to the *Schemes* of some of our modern Infidels, is not the only *Interpretation* that can be put on this *Appeal*, I leave to any man to judge. And did the *Fathers* say this? Or if they did, would not even *Children* justly laugh at them? But away with such Imputations on the *Fathers*. Such Nonsense and Contradiction is only fit for those, who can deny our Saviour's *Miracles* to be *real*, and then impudently assert them to be *Shadows* and *Types* of *other Miracles* to be done, that is, in truth, *nothing* to be a *Type* of *something*. Such Methods of confuting *Christianity* must be surely to any Man in his Senses, the strongest Confirmations of it.

The *Author* of the *Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*, was so sensible of the badness of his Cause, that when he comes under his third *Head*, to consider what *Jesus* meanes, when he appeals to his *Works and Miracles* as to a *Testimony and Witness* of his *divine Authority*, he avoids meddling with it in its *proper place* (b), and puts it off to the last, as plainly fore-seeing, (wonderful Honesty, and worthy of an *Infidel*!) that he should spoil his *Scheme* at once. But

(b) Pag. 59, 60, first Discourse.

at length the Mountain brings forth; and now (wonderful Production!) *he shall be short, there being no occasion of many words on it*ⁱ. What? because this wanted no clearing: or, because he had nothing to say to the purpose? yes, *he could*, he says, prove — something — *But the Argument would be dry and tedious*. I believe so; and he might have added, so weak and foolish, that, as mad as he was, he knew better than to expose *himself* and his *cause* in such a manner, as he must necessarily have done here, had he offer'd to proceed in it. No: he *will refer the matter entirely to the Fathers*; and then quotes *Hilary* and *Origen* to as much purpose, as he might have done *Servius*, or *Donatus* on *Virgil's Æneid*. He has most shamefully acted his part here, where he should have done his best, and his friends must blush for him, if he cannot do it for himself. He had acted more wisely to have slipt intirely over *this Head*, and told his Reader^k, as he had done before, *that it could not yet be rightly spoken to*: though there was one way better still, and that was, flatly to have deny'd that *Jesus* ever made such an *Appeal*, as is pretended, to his *Miracles* at all.

(i) *Disc.* 6. p. 51.

(k) *Disc.* 1. p. 66.

As to the *Absurdities* and *Incredibilities* charg'd on the *literal History of Christ's Miracles*, the very *Reception* of the *Gospel* among the most wise, and learned, and polite Nations of the World, after the strictest Examination of, and strongest Opposition to it, is a full and sufficient Confutation of this Plea. And to suppose, that, when our Saviour referr'd to the mighty Works, which he had done among the *Jews* as Proofs of his *Messiahship*, he appeal'd to *Facts incredible and absurd*, or to *such* as were not proper *Miracles* (1) of the *Messiah*, is itself the greatest absurdity. To conclude; either the *Miracles* of *Jesus*, as related by the *Evangelists*, were *real, credible, and true*: or *Christianity* was planted, and propagated WITHOUT any *Miracle* at all, which (if true) is a *Miracle of Miracles*, a *Miracle* abundantly more *incredible* in itself, and all its *circumstances* than all the *Miracles* in the *Four Gospels* put together. There we have *wonderful Effects* ascribed to a *divine Cause*: but here we have *one* the *most Miraculous* produced without any *extraordinary Cause* whatsoever. Wretched Absurdity! A Man, who believes this, can as easily believe,

(1) *Disc.* 1. p. 7, 8, &c.

that the *World* itself was *made* without an
omnipotent Creatour.

O merciful *Jesus*, who wouldst have all
 men to be saved, and didst thy miracles on
 purpose to bring all to the knowledge of
 the Truth: have mercy upon all *Jews*,
Turks, *Infidels*, and *Hereticks*, and take
 from them all ignorance, hardness of heart,
 and contempt of thy word; and so fetch
 them home, blessed Lord, to thy Flock,
 that they may be saved among the remnant
 of the true *Israelites*, and be made one
 fold under thee, the one Shepherd, who
 livest and reignest with the Father and the
 Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.
Amen.



A
DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
TRUTH *and* CERTAINTY
OF THE
Resurrection of *JESUS* from
the Dead.

DEMONSTRATION

OF THE

TRUTH AND CERTAINTY

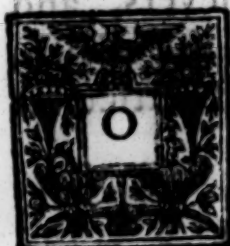
OF THE

Resurrection of JESUS from
the Dead.



I CORINTH. XV. 20.

Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.



IF all the Days of Joy, of Triumph, and Exultation, which God ever caused to shine upon his Church, this (*m*) most Eminently and Emphatically is the *Day*, which the Lord hath made for us *Christians* to be glad and rejoice in. Other days we solemnize in Reference and Respect to this, either as the Blessings of them were sent before to make way for, or given afterwards to confirm it. But this we celebrate in full Honour to itself as the Sum, and Center, and Meridian of all others; the Birth-day of all our Hopes, and the solemn Date and Origin of everlasting Life and Happiness restored to Mankind. For *now*, as the *Apostle* says, is

(*m*) Easter-Day.

E

Christ

Christ risen, as this glorious Morn he is risen, from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. He is risen from the dead: There is an Affirmation of the Truth and Certainty of the Fact. He is become the first-fruits of them that slept: There is the Virtue, the Power, and Efficacy of his Resurrection. Let us consider both these in their natural Order: And God grant that we may do it with such a Seriousness and Attention, such a Frame, and Temper, and Disposition of Heart and Mind, as to become better Believers, and better Livers, more stedfast in the Faith, and more studious of such a Practice as becomes it.

The first thing we are to consider, is the *Truth and Certainty of JESUS's Resurrection from the Dead, and the full Proof of it as a matter of Fact.*

And this indeed is a Point of that extraordinary Weight and Moment, that if this main Pillar of our Religion stood not on so firm a Basis, as to defy all the Batteries that can be rais'd against it, the whole Fabric of *Christianity* must soon drop into utter Ruin. For, as St. Paul argues (n), *if Christ is not risen, or, (which is near*

(n) 1 Cor. xv. 14.

the same thing) if there is not *sufficient Evidence* of his *Resurrection*; then is our *preaching vain*, and your *faith is vain also*. Then there has been no *Saviour* of Mankind; none has *redeemed* us from the *curse of sin*: *Jesus of Nazareth* was then an *Impostor*: He promised in Proof of his divine Mission to Rise the Third Day from the Dead; and if after such a Promise he rose not accordingly; he himself was a Deceiver, his Disciples false Witnesses, and his Religion all a Lie. This is evident enough upon this *Supposition*. But then, God be prais'd, this is but a *Supposition*, a base *Supposition*, grounded on no *Reason*, no *Argument*, no *Authority*, sufficient, and opposed by all the Strength of *Demonstration*, that a thing of this Nature is capable of.

So little *Reason* and *Argument* is there to support it, that the whole it leans upon, is the *Staff* of this *broken Reed*, that it is *Unnatural*, and therefore, says the *Infidel*, *impossible* for a Person really dead, as *Jesus* plainly was, to be restored again to Life. Just as if every thing that was out of the common Course, or above the Power of Nature, was not therefore possible to be brought about, and effected at all: A Conclusion! so False and Irrational from a Man who owns a *Deity*, that tho' *St. Paul*, in respect to Royal-Majesty, vouchsafed to ask

King *Agrippa* (o), *Why it should be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead*, meaning there the Blessed *Jesus*: Yet in his Conference with the *Athenian Philosophers*, when, upon his mentioning our Saviour's Resurrection, he was Laugh'd at, and Derided for so strange a Doctrine, he serves them, as they deserv'd, quite otherwise, and despising their false Wisdom, and conceited Ignorance, *turns his back on them* (p), and plainly shews them, that he did not think them worthy of an Answer.

Such and so contemptible were the Infidels of old, who rejected the Doctrine of Christ's Resurrection on account of its pretended Impossibility: And no less despicable would be their Followers and Disciples at this day, if Reason was but so carefully attended to as it ought to be. For to repeat St. *Paul's* question on this Occasion; *Why should it be thought incredible, that GOD should raise a Man, the Man Christ Jesus, from the Dead?* is there any Contradiction? any either Natural, or Moral Impossibility in the thing? could there be no sufficient Reason for so extraordinary a Work? or, if there was, could God be neither Willing, nor Able to effect it? was not the restoring Mankind to a State of e-

(o) Acts xxvi. 8.

(p) Acts xvii. 23.

ternal Life and Happiness a great and worthy Occasion for such a Miracle? and, if it was, why should the Goodness of God be thought unwilling to answer it? or, if willing, why should his Power be so much as called in Question? For is he GOD? and is he not *Omnipotent*? could he at first make Man, *and breathe into him a living soul*? and could he not afterwards make a dead Man to live, and his departed Spirit, before his Body was corrupted, or even afterwards, if he pleased, to return to its former Habitation? what Absurdity, I beseech you? what Incredibility is there in all this? nay, what Difficulty at all, but what might as reasonably be objected to the World's Creation, or the Formation of the meanest Animal, as our Saviour's Resurrection? this however is the Enemy's only *Argument* from *Reason*. What else he has on this Head, are only jealous *Suspicions* and *Surmises*, void of all Grounds, which I shall have occasion to consider after.

And then for any *Authority*, any *Evidence*, or *Testimony* to be produced against this *Fact* of Christ's Resurrection; he has none, there is none, but what any Man awake would be sure to laugh at; I mean that ridiculous *Story* of the *sleeping Watch*, the merest Dream, the most idle and inconsistent Tale, that ever was invented:

A Tale!

'A Tale! so monstrously absurd, that it is fit for the belief of none but the most credulous Infidels, Men, who *strain* the smallest *Gnats*, and *swallow* the largest *Camels*.

His Disciples, say the corrupted Guard, (q) *came by Night* to the Sepulchre. Unfortunate Beginning! How came they thither? How, at midnight, did they pass the City-Guards and Gates? How by Moon-light (as the Moon was then at the Full) could they possibly go unseen? This is a wretched setting out. But let us hear what follows. *They came by night, and stole him away, while we slept*. Did they so indeed? bold Disciples! discerning Soldiers! fortunate Attempt! amazing Lethargy! What! all the Guard asleep at once? all so fast, that they could not hear the Steps of a Number of Men passing and repassing them, nor the Noise of a huge Stone, when taken from the Sepulchre? This is strange: this is marvelous indeed: This is enough to make, what our Adversaries will not care for, another *Miracle* of the Matter: and had the Soldiers themselves gone at first with such a Story to the Chief-Priests and Elders, who employed them, I doubt not but they had met with another sort of *Security* than what was

(q) Matth. xxviii. 13—15.

promised them, as well as other * *Rewards*. The *Governour* then had been *persuaded*, not to pardon, but to punish, so notorious a Breach of Discipline; and for his own Sake and Safety must have done so, even tho' he himself could be supposed to have directed so foolish, so dangerous, so impolitick a thing.

Besides, had the Chief Priests heard, or believed, or so much as suspected such a Fraud, as is here charged on *Christ's* Disciples; is it credible, that in a thing of such consequence they would have sat down so quietly as they did in relation to *them*? What, the Body stole? and no Search after it? No Reward offer'd for so important a Discovery? Not one of the Disciples seiz'd, and examin'd by Torture? All of them suffered to live and propagate a Lie in Confirmation of a Doctrine, for which their Master had suffer'd Death? This is a likely Story: and what wonder now if a Man, who *believes* such *Nonsense* as this, *disbelieves Christianity*?

I may farther add, that, if the Contrivance of this Story had been better than it is, there is still a Circumstance, that spoils its Credit, and makes it to the last Degree improbable, and that is, That the Disciples could have no one Motive to tempt them to

* See the Case of St Peter's Guard, Acts xii.

such a Theft, as they were accused of. *They stole him away.* But why? To bury him more honourably? That they could not propose to do. For *he made his Grave*, as the Scriptures had foretold (r), *with the Rich*, and was graced with the most noble Sepulchre. Was it then to gain a Belief of his Resurrection? This implies, that they had understood, and believed, that he should rise from the dead. But this they themselves declare, that they never had a Notion of, 'till he was actually risen; and there is all the Reason in the Word to take their Word for it. Their Master indeed had foretold this to them (s); but they understood no more of his *Rising*, than of his *Dying*. The latter to their *Jewish* way of Reasoning was absurd in the *Messiah*; and without this the former had no Meaning. They thought, that *Christ* ought not to have suffered those things which *Jesus* did: and when he had suffered them, their Hopes in him, as the *Messiah*, were all over. *We trusted*, say they, *that it HAD been He, which should have redeemed Israel*: but after his Death this *Trust* was fled, and their Thoughts of him as a *Redeemer* intirely vanish'd. Had they now stole his Corpse to put a Cheat upon the World, *and to serve*, as is ridi-

(r) Ifai. liii. 9.

(s) Mat. xvi. 21.

culously suggested (t), *their Ambition, or Revenge upon the Pharisaical Priesthood*; their *Gospel* had been quite different from what it is. Their preaching then had been, that *Jesus* never did, nor could die; that he laid so long in the Sepulchre dead only in Appearance, and then arose the third Day according to his Prophecy. This would sooner have been invented by the Disciples, if Cheats, and more readily believed by their Countrymen than the *Doctrine* of a *dead Messiah* come to *Life* again. As the *Prophecies* of the *Old Testament* concerning the *Messiah* were at that time understood, not the most foolish, not the most knavish, *Jew* then living would have owned a *crucified Saviour*, and much less thought it worth his while to preach him, least of all have ventured his Life to steal his Body for that purpose.

From the whole, I think, 'tis evident, That the *Disciples* could not steal the Body of *Jesus*, nor have any Motive so to do; that the *sleeping Soldiers* could not witness that they did it, and, if they could, would in such a case have been severely punished for neglect of Duty; that the chief Priests themselves believed no such thing; and that the whole Story is foolish and absurd.

(t) *Sixth Discourse on the Miracles, &c.*

Such then are the *Reasons* and *Authorities*, such the Arms and Weapons, which, for want of better, the Champions of Infidelity are forced to make use of; so light, that the weakest and most childish Hand not only may, but generally loves the most to brandish them; and so slight and insignificant, that the strongest *Goliath*, who *defies the living God*, can fight nothing but shadows with them. If they wound, they wound nothing but a wild and vain *Imagination*: but if they meet with *Reason*, they are shiver'd to pieces.

Let us now weigh our own *Evidence*, and see the difference. For a new, an unusual, and super-natural thing, that has no contradiction in it, to have been done by the infinite Power of G O D, neither is, as we have seen, nor can reasonably be thought, at all incredible; especially if it has not any powerful Testimony and Authority against it. Such exactly is *Jesus's Resurrection*. It is neither impossible in it's own nature, nor is it opposed by any Evidence, but what intirely destroys itself. And if neither of these can be urged against it; then, if it appears to have all the Proof and Attestation, which a thing of that nature can justly be expected to have, the consequence plainly is, that we ought as readily and firmly to assent to it, as to a matter of the strictest Demonstration. For things of this kind are capable
of

of no more than an *Historical Evidence*, founded on the *Testimony* of such *Witnesses*, whose *Honesty*, and *Knowledge* in the affair, cannot reasonably be doubted of.

Which therefore of these *Two* is it, that is question'd in *Christ's* Disciples? Their *Honesty* will you say? Then what Marks and Instances can be brought of the contrary? What Motives had they to propagate such a Lie, and what Encouragement to go on with it? All they met, or could hope to meet with, for their pains, was Scorn and Contempt, Ignominy and Disgrace, Stripes and Imprisonments, Banishments, and Persecutions, and Death itself. And can things like these make Men more resolute for what they are conscious is a Lie, than most people dare to be for what they know to be really Truth? Can we reasonably suppose, that any one Man in his Senses would die a Martyr for such a Lie, and much more that Numbers would constantly and courageously suffer the most barbarous and bloody Deaths for confirmation of it. This is unnatural, and morally impossible. This can never be believed of any Men, and much less of *Jesus's* Disciples, who bear all the Marks and Characters of *Honesty*, Integrity, and Plain-dealing, that can be thought of. Where do we find such Openness and Ingenuity, such Candour and Simplicity, as in them, and in their Writings? How do they

record the meanness of their Professions, their Ignorance, their Errors, their Sins, and Failings, and Infirmities? And are these Signs of their Dishonesty? or are not they certain Tests of the utmost Sincerity, and Veracity that can be imagined?

Their *Honesty* therefore cannot be doubted of: much less can the sufficiency of their *Knowledge* in this affair be at all disputed. The plainest and most illiterate Men in nature may be as competent Judges of a Matter of Fact, whose knowledge depends upon the Senses, as the most learned and sagacious: and after so many repeated Proofs of our Saviour's Resurrection as the Disciples had, we cannot but suppose them as incapable of being deceived as the best Scholars and Philosophers in the World.

Neither does it at all appear, that they were more *credulous* in this matter than the greatest Sceptics and Infidels would have been. The *Women*, we are told by the *Evangelists*, were the first to whom this Business of Salvation was discovered. As *Woman* was first in the Transgression, and the prime occasion of bringing Death into the World: so *Woman* was now to be the first messenger of Life and Immortality restored to Mankind, and that too by the *Woman's* Seed. They *came early*, as on this Morning,

ing, *the first day of the Week* (u), to *Christ's Sepulchre*: and what thoughts did they discover when they came thither? Why, so small an expectation of their Lord's Resurrection, that when they found the Stone roll'd away from the Sepulchre, and the Body of *Jesus* not there, they were *much perplexed thereabout* (x), and under such a concern, that one of them immediately runs back to *Peter* and *John* with this complaint: *They* (the *Jews*, or their Guards) *have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him* (y). Upon this the two Disciples hasten to the place (z), and finding it to be so far true, as she had said, that the Body was gone; they were surprized, and *wondered at what was come to pass* (a). They *wondered* indeed, but still they did not **believe*, nor so much as had a thought of their Master's Resurrection. This first was revealed to the Women, who tarried at the Sepulchre, by the *Angels* (b), and afterwards confirm'd to them by the Appearance of *Christ* himself. They

(u) Luke xxiv. 1. (x) Ibid. 4. (y) John xx. 2.
(z) Luke xxiv. 24. (a) Ibid. 12.

* In Joh. xx. 8. it is said, that John saw, and believed. But the Cambridge MS. reads *ειδε, & ἐκ ἐπιστάσει*, he saw, and believed not. *Very justly.* For it follows: For as yet they knew not the Scripture; that he must rise again from the dead. Which is added as a Reason of, and Excuse for, his Unbelief.

(b) Mat. xxviii. 7,—9.—Mark xvi. 6,—9.

now recollect, and understand what he had said unto them of his *Rising again, when he was in Galilee* (c), and returning with a mixture of *Fear and Joy*, they relate what they had heard, and seen to the whole Body of the Disciples, who were then assembled together, *mourning and weeping* (d) for the Death of their late Lord. And how did they receive these Tidings? The Women's words, says the Evangelist (e), *seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not*. They wanted farther and better Evidence of so marvellous a thing; and the very same day *Christ* himself takes care to give it them by personally appearing to, and conversing with *Cleopas* and another, as they were going from *Jerusalem* to *Emmaus* (f). He then from their own Discourse takes occasion to *upbraid them for their slowness of heart in understanding and believing what the Prophets had spoken*: He shews them from the Scriptures what was foretold of the *Messiah*; and *beginning at Moses* expounds to them *all along* the Predictions concerning himself: He enters into an House, and abides with them, and there makes himself fully known to them *in breaking and blessing of bread*. They then, on his departure,

(c) Luke xxiv. 6, 7, 8.

(e) Luke xxiv. 11.

(d) Mark xvi. 10.

(f) Ibid. xxiv. 13, &c.

reflect on what he had said to them in the way, and convinced it was their Master, they returned in haste to *Jerusalem*, and are there prevented in their own Relation by an Assurance from those they were going to give it to, *That the Lord was risen indeed, and had appeared unto Simon.* This first was positive from the Men-disciples: and to confirm what they said, *as they thus spake,* that very instant *Jesus* himself, (the Doors, which were shut, giving way to him,) *stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.* And did even this fully satisfy them? No. *They were only terrified and affrighted, and supposed, that they saw a spirit.* And even at last, when he bids them *not be troubled, nor let doubtful thoughts arise in their hearts, but behold his Hands and his Feet, that it was He himself,* nay, *handle him, and see,* that quite different from a Spirit he had real *Flesh and Bones*; even then, it seems they were not intirely satisfied, till he had *taken and eaten Meat before them,* and talk'd with them so long, as to *open their Understanding,* and make them see what was *written* in the Scripture, and how it *behoved* Christ to *suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.*

And was this Easiness? was this Credulity? And yet *Thomas*, who was not with them at that Time, would by no means rest his Faith upon their Words. They told and assured him,

him, that *they had seen the Lord* (g). But what was his Answer? *Except*, says he (h), *I shall see in his hands, the print, the Fissure, of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* You may fancy and imagine what you please. Your senses may have deceived you, or you did not make sufficient Use of them: You may have seen a Shadow, a Phantasm, an Apparition; or some body may have imposed on you in the Likeness of our late Master. For my part, I can give no credit to what you say: You must either endeavour to deceive me, or have certainly been deceived your selves; and, except I can have such and such Evidence, I will not believe. This he required, and this he had. The blessed *Jesus* condescends to him, and the eighth Day after, when the Disciples were assembled, and *Thomas* with them, he comes again in the same manner he did before, and applying himself to *Thomas* bids him *reach his finger, and examine his hands; and reach his hand, and thrust it into his side, and not be faithless, but believing.* Could the most squeamish Infidel in the World make a Doubt of this? *Thomas*, it is plain, with all his Scepticism, could not: his Diffidence is all over, and he now

 (g) Joh. xx. 25.

(h) Ibid.

breaks out in Wonder and Exclamation, *My Lord, and my God!* It is impossible for me in the Compass of this Discourse to consider every particular *History* of this kind; how he was seen afterwards by *Peter*, and this same *Thomas*, and *Nathanael* (i), and the *sons of Zebedee*, and *two other disciples*, at the Sea of *Tiberias*; how likewise he appeared to *James* (k), and others; and not only to small Numbers, but, as *St. Paul* witnesses (l), to *above five hundred brethren at once*, most of whom were living when he wrote to the *Corinthians*. Nor was he seen once, or twice in a flight and transitory manner, but he *shew'd* (m), demonstrated, *himself to be alive by many infallible Proofs* for the space of *forty Days*; commissions his Apostles in solemn Words to preach his Gospel, and govern his Church (n); leads them out as far as *Bethany* (o), and blesses them, and comforts them for the loss of his Presence with the Promise of the *Holy Ghost* (p), which not many Days after they should be *baptized* with.

This was to bring the Truth of his Resurrection to a farther Trial: And what could be a Demonstration of it to his Disciples, and others, if this could not? This miracu-

(i) Joh. xxi. 2.

(k) 1 Cor. xv. 7.

(l) Ibid. 6.

(m) Acts i. 3.

(n) Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

(o) Luke

xxiv. 50.

(p) Acts i. 4, 5.

lous Descent of the *blessed Spirit* (q) in a full Effusion of all its Gifts and Graces he sealed it with, and he did it in so glorious and wonderful a manner, so openly, and undeniably, and at so publick a Time, when there were Strangers at *Jerusalem*, from all Parts of the World, to be Witnesses of it, that it was not to be doubted of by any thing but Blindness and Prejudice itself: Nay, so far did it convince the *Jews*, that in one single Day, the very Day on which this Confirmation was given, no less than about *three thousand souls were added to the Church* (r); and shortly after such Numbers and Multitudes, as, considering the Discouragements they met with, can by no means be accounted for, but from the Strength and Clearness of the Evidence, and the powerful Influence and Operation of the *Divine Spirit* upon their Minds.

What I have here laid down will, I doubt not, fully satisfy every honest and unprejudiced Understanding. But still I know what has been, and will be said against it by some Disputants, who are always more ready, and more able to object than answer Difficulties.

It has lately been asserted by a *most infamous Writer*, that *Jesus*, if he rose from the dead, ought for the Satisfaction of the

(q) Acts ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

(r) Ibid. 41.

Jews not to have come out of his Sepulchre, till the Chief-Priests, who sealed the Stone, had examined and broke the Seals. But why so? What obligation was *Jesus* under to this? What right had the *Jews* to demand, or expect such Satisfaction, any more than to command him, as they did a little before (s), *to come down from the cross, and they would believe him?* Did the Chief-Priests, when they sealed the Sepulchre, enter into a *Covenant* with the dead *Jesus*, that he should not Rise, (if he did at all) till such a *stated Time*? This (absurd as it is) he might as truly and modestly have asserted, as he does afterwards a *Compact* between *them* and the *Apostles*, the *Condition* of which, as he had it from the *Father of Lies*, was this; “ That if *Jesus* arose from “ the dead in the Presence of the Chief- “ Priests upon their opening the Seals of “ the Sepulchre at the Time appointed; then “ was he to be acknowledg’d to be the “ *Messiah*: But if he continued in a corrupt “ and putrified State of Mortality, then was “ he to be granted to be an *Impostor*.” Vain Romancer! From what Forge is this? What shadow of Truth has it? The Monster himself in the same Breath that he affirms it is forced to disown it. “ We read not says

(s) Matth. xxvii. 42.

“ he, that the *Apostles* gave their *consent* “ to this *Covenant*.” A fine *Covenant* this! But to let pass the Absurdity; how should they consent to a Thing that never was? Who knows not, who sees not, that the sealing of the Stone was only to prevent any possible Fraud in the Soldiers set to watch it? An Act, which (if-it must be called a *Covenant*) was a *Covenant* with the Guards, and them only. As to the *Apostles*, no manner of Regard was farther had to them, than to secure the Sepulchre from any Attempt of theirs, who at that time, alas! hoped no more for their Master’s Resurrection, than the Chief Priests after all their Care and Caution feared it.

There is nothing therefore in this idle Fancy. Nor is there more in that vain Pretence, That *Jesus* did not rise at the *Time* that he foretold. If he rose at all, (as we have proved he did) he certainly rose at the *right Time*, and that must be the *time foretold* by him. He was buried on *Friday*, he continued in the Grave all *Saturday*, and rose on *Sunday*. Here are plainly *three inclusive Days*, and reckoning, as usual, the Nights into the Days, *Jonah* was not more *three Days, and three Nights* in the *Bowels of the Whale*, than *Jesus* was in the *Heart of the Earth*.

Such

Such trifling *Objections* scarce deserve our Notice. Let us pass on to *one*, that has something in it worthy of an Answer; and *that* is taken from *Jesus's* not appearing after his Death in publick to the *Jews*.

This the Wisdom of some Men think he ought to have done. And why, say they, if *Christ* really rose from the Dead, why then did not he demonstrate himself Alive in the Face and Presence of all his Enemies, as well as his Friends? Why did not he appear openly to all the *Jews*, and to the Chief-Priests and Elders more especially, who had been the Instruments of his Death, and were the greatest Sticklers against the Truth of his Resurrection? Such an Appearance, say they, would have been a most convincing Evidence of his Rising, and the want of it gives a shrewd Suspicion, that he did not Rise at all.

This is plausible at first Sight. But had our Saviour acted in this manner, the Enemies of *Christianity* would have had a much stronger Objection to the Truth of the *Gospel* than any they have at present. *Christ* himself just before his Crucifixion had expressly declared to the City and People of *Jerusalem*, that *their Day* was now over, that his *Commission* to them upon Earth was at an
End,

End, and that ἀπ' ἀρχῆς *, after the short appearance he was now going to make among them at the approaching Feast, *they should not see him, till they should say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord (t),* that is, till his second coming in Glory, when they should own and acknowledge him to be their Saviour. And if after his Death he had done otherwise, if he had publicly presented himself at his Sepulchre, or in the City and Temple of *Jerusalem*, and done all those things, which were necessary to prove himself alive to all the People: then what had this been but the greatest Contradiction to himself? The *Jews* might then, as well as our Infidels might now, have objected his own Words to him, and nothing that I know of could have reconciled so great an Inconsistence.

But suppose now, that even after the limited Time of our Saviour's Visitation was expired, he *might* again have appeared in a publick Manner to the *Jews*, and actually had done so: what then, I would know, had been the Consequence? What the Issue and Event of such an Appearance? Either in this Case the *Jewish* Senate and People

(t) Matth. xxiii. 23.

* Ἄλλοι δὲ τὸ, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἀντὶ τῆς, μετὰ τὸ σταυρωθῆναι, νοῦσι — καὶ τοῖς ἐφεξῆς, ἕως ἂν εἴπῃ, — ἥ δὲ λέγει αὐτῇ παρυσίαν φασὶ σημαίνει. Chrysost. Hom. lxxiv.

had all believed his Resurrection, -or they had not. If they had believed it, then we must have had a *National Testimony* to the Fact from the *Chief Priests* and *Elders*: and what would that have looked like, what would it have been call'd, but a political Trick, a mere Juggle of the *Jewish* State, to save the Credit of their Scriptures, which had so long foretold a *Messiah*, and so determined the Time of his Appearance, that he must come then, or never? On the other hand, had our Saviour after his Resurrection appear'd to his Enemies, who disbelieved it, the Result of this had been an Attempt to apprehend him, as taken from the Cross before he was actually dead. And if on this Attempt he had disappear'd, or vanish'd from them, as he necessarily must have done, except he submitted to a second Crucifixion; the next thing had been, That their Senses were deluded, or that it was only an *Apparition*, or some *Devil* or other, that assisted him while alive, who now took his Shape and Countenance to carry on his wicked Ends. This, in all human Probability, had been the Conclusion: and I think in this Case they might as reasonably have said and done thus, as when they heard the Apostles speak in the Language of every Nation, they ascribed the strange Effect

fect to *Drunkenness* (u). Such Hardness, and Blindness, and Stupidity as this, will sufficiently account for our Saviour's not appearing to the *Jews* indifferently.

Other Proofs they did not want, and those certain and unexceptionable. Witness the Testimony of the Soldiers who guarded the Sepulchre, confirmed by that σεισμός, or rather σεισμός μέγας *, that great Concussion of the Earth, or Air, which undoubtedly was felt and perceived all over the City of *Jerusalem*. We cannot doubt but the Watch underwent the most strict and severe Examination that could be thought of; and if there had not been the strongest Proofs and Circumstances, to corroborate their Evidence, they had most certainly met with the severest Punishment. Add to this, the many Miracles which the Apostles daily did, and the wonderful Progress which their Doctrine daily made; and then say, whether or no the *Jews* had Demonstration full enough of *Christ's* Resurrection.

And yet full as it was, we may observe, that *Jesus* even to his Enemies, his greatest and bitterest Enemies, when he saw there was a sincere, and upright, and honest Heart,

(u) Acts ii. 13.

* Σεισμός, ὁ βεγσμός καὶ ἥχος, ἀπὸ τοῦ σίζω. Phavorinus.

did not refuse to exhibit himself in Person. Who was ever a more violent Opposer of the Truth of Christ's Resurrection than he, who was afterwards *Saint Paul*? Who a more zealous, a more enraged, and furious Persecutor of the *Christian* Name and Doctrine than He? And who *breathed out such Threatnings and Slaughters against the Disciples of the Lord*? Such he was, and such he calls himself, *a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious* (x). And yet because what he did, he *did ignorantly in unbelief* (y), how graciously was *Christ* pleased to reveal himself to him, and stop him in the very midst of his furious Career? No words can describe this so well as his own in his Speech to King *Agrippa* (z), in which he shews him not only what he then was, but what he had been, and what were the means of his Conversion.

My manner of Life, says he, *from my youth up, which was at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, (if they would testify) that after the most rigid Sect of our Religion, I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the Promise made by God unto our Fathers:—for which Hope's sake,*

(x) 1 Tim. i. 13.

(y) Ibid.

(z) Acts xxvi.

King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that GOD should raise the dead? I verily thought (formerly) with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; which I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the Saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the Chief-priests, and, when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them in every Synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the Chief-priests; at MID-DAY, O King, I saw in the way, a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the Sun, shining round me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, saying, Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And, I said, who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand on thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those in which I will appear unto thee.—Whereupon, O King Agrippa,

grippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly Vision; but shewed first to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and through all the Coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should turn to God.— And having obtained help, I continue unto this day, witnessing (what I saw) to small and great.—Nay, says he, to Festus, the King knoweth of these things, before whom I also speak freely. For I am persuaded, that none of these things are hidden from him: for this thing was not done in a CORNER.

Who is there not possess'd with a Spirit of Slumber, that such a Testimony as this would not only *almost*, as it did *Agrippa*, but *altogether*, persuade to be a CHRISTIAN? especially if he reads the whole History of *St. Paul*, and considers the many great and wonderful things he did and suffered after his Conversion for *Christianity*, that is, for this great *Article* of *Jesus's* RESURRECTION, on which the whole of *Christianity* depends. He calls himself indeed (a) *the least of the Apostles*, nay, one who was not worthy to be stiled an *Apostle*, because he had persecuted the Church of

(a) 1 Cor. xv. 9.

GOD. But what large amends did he make afterwards? and how far did he exceed the other *Ministers of Christ*, (*b*) *in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in Deaths often?* These, and all his other Sufferings, which he at large enumerates, he finished with a glorious Martyrdom, and all this for the Name and Resurrection of the Lord *Jesus*. Who can read his Epistles, whether publick or private, whether to whole Churches, or single Persons, and not be warm'd, and won, and perfectly convinced by that noble Simplicity, that unaffected Piety, that intense Zeal, that extensive Charity, that invincible Courage and Constancy, that generous Contempt of himself, and that anxious Care and Concern for the Good of *Christ's* Kingdom, which every where display themselves in all his Writings? God be thanked, that we have so many other Proofs and Evidences of our Lord's Resurrection: But had Providence so ordered, that by some means or other, none should have been left to us but that of *St. Paul*, and that only, I must freely profess, that I do not see how the Force of this single Testimony, by Men of Reason, could have possibly been resisted.

(*b*) - Cor. xi. 23.

I have now done with the first Point, *the Truth and Certainty of Christ's Resurrection*: and I am sensible, tho' not sorry, that I have dwelt so long upon it, that I have not time to proceed to what I purposed to speak of in the second Place, *the Consequence, the Power, and Virtue, and Efficacy of this Resurrection*. I shall therefore leave that Part to another Opportunity, and, at present, from what has been said, draw a few short Inferences, and so conclude.

Now if *Jesus* is risen from the Dead, and we have full and certain Evidence that He is so: then have we at once an infallible Proof of the Truth of his Religion, and of his Mission from God, to be a Teacher and Saviour of the World. For it cannot be, that God should raise an Impostor, a Deceiver, from the dead to confirm a Lie to us. And therefore, if *Christ* is risen, he really was that divine Person he pretended to be, he was the *Messiah*, the Son of God, the Redeemer of fallen Man: His Doctrines and Declarations were all as true as the God they came from, and his Expositions and Applications of the Scriptures, as certain and infallible as that Divine Spirit itself who gave them. Here at once we have a Demonstration of the Piety, the Purity, and Integrity of his Life, and of the Truth, and Certainty, and Reality of all his Miracles. And
therefore

therefore *from henceforth* let no man trouble us, trouble us with vain, and blasphemous, and lying Words, the Productions of Madness, the Scorn of wise Men, and the Admiration of Fools. If the Enemies of *Christianity* would prove any thing against it, let them prove by fair Arguments, that *Christ* is not risen, and then it will be time enough to throw away our *Bibles*. But till then, my Brethren, (and then, I am sure, we shall do it long enough) let us *keep* them close, *keep* and *use* them with *Reverence* and *Humility*; and *hold fast*, faster than our Lives, *the Profession*, which they teach us, *without wavering*.



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